**FAMILY MATTERS *EVERY CHILD. EVERY PARENT.***

# **ACADEMY OF EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE** 728 Parkside Boulevard, Toledo, Ohio 43607

# ***A monthly newsletter from the Department of Special Services***

# VOL. 1 Issue 6 *WORKING TOGETHER FOR FAMILY SUCCESS* DECEMBER, 2020

*Family Matters* is an outreach effort from the Academy of Educational Excellence– Department of Special Services and its SPED Program. *Family Matters* will provide parents with information about special education and other resources available to assist them to help their children.

  

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|  | **MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL SERVICES**  **Dr. Israel I. Koppisch**  [iikoppisch@aeetoledo.org](mailto:iikoppisch@aeetoledo.org)  Tel: 419-382-2280 |
| Dear Parents—Happy Holidays!  At AEE we believe every child deserves the chance to reach their God-given potential. We are highly committed in providing and ensuring that our children have equal access to healthcare and educational opportunities, helping children have a voice in community affairs, and sensitizing their parents and community leaders to help eliminate stigma toward children with special needs and/or disabilities. Our Lord will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’—Matthew 25:40  Unfortunately, very often children with disabilities often face discrimination, bullying, neglect, abuse, and violence. But they have God-given gifts that are often overlooked. [At AEE we work in disability inclusion](https://www.worldvision.org/our-work/disability-inclusion) spans in everything we do. We envision children living with disabilities afforded the same access to healthcare, education, government services, and overall dignity as every other child in their community. We treat them with love, dignity and respect in our day-to-day programming, advocate for their rights, and provide disability awareness training to parents, caregivers, teachers and local leaders to eliminate stigma.  *During this Christmas season let us all pray for all our children but especially for our special needs students: Lord, help children with special needs and disabilities know they are loved and they matter to You and the world. Through Your Spirit, help our staff members train parents and caregivers to walk in humility to eliminate destructive stigma toward people with disabilities. May children with special needs and disabilities be afforded improved access to basic services, healthcare, and education. “Because* when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.” Luke 14, 13-14  *This monthly edition of our FAMILY MATTERS NEWSLETTER is focused in trying to help parents improve the quality of their children’s life skills. On this issue we will address different areas in which every household can focus to improve family relations; improve children’s performance at school and improve children’s physical and mental health.*  At AEE we are here to assist and support our families.  Cordially,  Dr. Israel I. Koppisch | |



**Improving the Quality of Your Children's Sleep**

Sleep quality can make the difference in maintaining a daily routine, promoting academic learning, and supporting general health. However, with the many changes that families have made in response to the pandemic and virtual learning at home, children may have more difficulty recognizing and following a set schedule which includes time for sleep. When youth do not get enough sleep, they may experience problems with emotional regulation, mood, behavior, and academic performance. Important cognitive abilities for learning are more likely to be impaired, such as attention, memory, and planning. Lack of sleep may be observed as physical fatigue, rubbing at eyes, sleeping at a desk, or a shuffling gait. Less apparent signs of poor sleep such as irritability, poor attention span, and poor impulse control may be incorrectly attributed to other issues.

Youth have significant differences in the number of hours of sleep appropriate for their development. Here are sleep recommendations by age offered by the [*National Sleep Foundation (NSF)*](https://www.sleepfoundation.org/)*:*

* Newborns (birth to 3 months) need 14 to 17 hours of sleep per day.
* Infants (4 to 11 months) need 12 to 15 hours of sleep per day.
* Toddlers (1 to 2 years) need 11 to 14 hours of sleep per day.
* Preschoolers (3 to 5 years) need 10 to 13 hours of sleep per day.
* **School age children (6 to 13 years) need 9 to 11 hours of sleep per day.**
* **Teenagers (14 to 17 years) need 8 to 10 hours of sleep per day.**
* Younger adults (18 to 25 years) need 7 to 9 hours of sleep per day.

There are many strategies that parents can implement at home that have been found to be effective in reducing sleep-related problems. Families and caregivers should pay special attention to the sensory factors that can negatively impact sleep, such as uncomfortable temperatures, bright lights, loud or sudden noises, eating too close to bedtime, and physically uncomfortable sleeping arrangements or bedding. The [*National Association of School Psychologists (NASP*)](https://www.nasponline.org/) recommends these six research-based strategies to help improve the quality of your children's sleep.

1. **Talk to your children about their sleep.**Open communication can help determine what is keeping children from sleeping and uncover ways to address any problems, such as changing nightly routines (e.g., homework is done immediately after school instead of after dinner) or removing distractions (e.g., providing a nightlight to replace the overhead light or keeping pets out of the bedroom).
2. **Stay involved in monitoring your children's sleep.**Parents often become less involved as their children get older and may be unaware of what time a child is actually falling asleep, particularly on non-school nights. It is critical that parents take an active role in their children's sleep routines and schedule in order to help them establish healthy sleep habits.
3. **Make sure there is enough time for sleep.**Parents should set bed and wake times that allow for sufficient sleep duration based on the age for each child. Once school start times are known for the year, the best approach is to determine what time a child needs to wake up and subtract from that time the appropriate number of hours for sleep while accounting for the time it may take the child to fall asleep (e.g., 15 to 30 minutes). For example, if a child needs to get up at 6:00 a.m. and 10 hours of sleep are recommended, bedtime would be 7:30 p.m. (including 30 minutes for falling asleep).

1. **Keep consistent bedtimes.**Bedtimes should be consistent across the week. Bedtimes across weekdays and weekends should not vary by more than an hour.
2. **Establish bedtime routines.**Families should establish a bedtime routine that may include relaxing activities such as reading or bath time. Bedtime routines should reflect the following elements: (1) maintaining a positive home climate to support the child's emotional well-being, (2) encouraging children to fall asleep independently, and (3) having children use their beds only for sleep as allowing other activities to take place in bed creates a connection in the brain between the bed and being awake.
3. **Eliminate technology from the bedroom.**This objective is twofold. First, using technology (e.g., phone, TV, or computer) is distracting and can keep children awake. Second, the blue light from electronics can affect the hormones responsible for making children feel sleepy. In addition, consider using applications on technology that reduce blue light near the end of the day. Many newer technology devices come with this feature built-in, but additional programs can be downloaded to regulate the color of light depending on the time of day.



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| **MESSAGE**  **FROM THE INTERVENTION SPECIALIST**  **Margaret Hallett**  [mhallett@aeetoledo.org](mailto:mhallett@aeetoledo.org) | C:\Users\AEE Principal\Desktop\SPED- 2020-2021\MARGARET HALLET.jpg |
| Greetings Families!  **ALL CHILDREN CAN LEARN!**  Sincerely,  Mrs. Margaret Hallett | |
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# The Origins of the Poinsettia: A Long, Strange Tale

# **Managing Difficult Behaviors at Home**

Many children are experiencing anxiety, boredom, and almost unlimited time cooped up with family due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Now add in recent events that have highlighted racism and social injustice in our country. This is an extremely challenging and uncertain time impacting our children. In response, many children may be showing an increase in difficult behaviors. Here are some behavioral strategies that parents can use to manage problem behaviors that have shown up at home. It is best to put into place behavioral strategies that prevent difficult behaviors from appearing in the first place. The following two strategies work to do just that.

**Routines**

Routines are regular procedures and/or a sequence of actions consistently followed. It is a predictable activity or regularly scheduled program that typically occurs at a specific time of day and/or in a specific order. Children benefit from a clearly established routine as they do best when their lives are consistent and predictable. This helps children to feel safe and secure while minimizing tantrums and other problem behaviors.

The [*American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)*](https://www.healthychildren.org/English/Pages/default.aspx)offers several tips related to establishing routines. When determining a new routine or schedule for your children, it tends to work best to include children’s input through a family meeting.

* **Balance**– Have routines, but be sure to leave room for flexibility and choice for children.
* **Mornings** – Have a morning routine that includes preparation the night before, positive communication about the day that lies ahead, a healthy breakfast, and a consistent way to say “goodbye,” such as a hug and a quick, "Have a good day!”
* **Structured Day to Help with Learning** – Use a visual schedule to help with predictability and time management. Use checklists or shorter visual schedules for task expectations. Visuals are particularly helpful with younger children.
  + Include things like lunch, chores, exercise, online social time with friends, and homework in the afternoon.
  + Be sure to build in time for creative play as it is especially important for children.
  + For example, suggest that your children draw pictures of ways your family is staying safe, make a collage to display, or build an indoor fort or castle.
  + It is also good to set aside at least 10 to 20 minutes of undivided parental attention for each child a few times a week. Children will benefit from distraction-free time where you choose the time and they choose the activity.
* **Evenings**– Have a healthy dinner with other family members together at the table when possible, and without electronics. Talk with each other about your day. Keep it positive and celebrate any successes.
* **Bedtime** – Identify a specific bedtime, and stick with it. The National Sleep Foundation provides [recommended sleep times by age.](https://www.sleepfoundation.org/press-release/national-sleep-foundation-recommends-new-sleep-times) Have a nighttime ritual, such as bath, brushing teeth, story time, conversation, and songs. Avoid excitable activities that do not promote calmness.

**Reinforcement**

Reinforcement is anything that occurs after a behavior is displayed that increases the likelihood of that behavior happening again in the future. It varies by individual, so it is important to figure out what specifically will motivate your children. Reinforcement is one of the most used behavior principles because it plays an important role in how quickly a behavior is learned. This process can help with decreasing problem behavior and teaching appropriate behavior.

There are two types of reinforcement. Both types of reinforcement can be material-based, activity-based, or social. Use varied reinforcement to maintain interest.

* **Positive Reinforcement** – Something desirable is given (for example...praise, a sticker, points, money, a new toy, time for a fun activity or time with a preferred person).
* **Negative Reinforcement**– Something undesirable is removed (for example...not being required to complete homework questions, not having to do a chore).

Here are ideas for how best to use reinforcement:

* Identify behaviors that you want to see in your children. Choose just a few (no more than five) positively worded expectations. Discuss them with your children and have the expectations displayed where they can be seen, either through visuals or words depending on age. Some examples of expectations of behavior might be to use appropriate language, show kindness to others, or complete chores when asked.
* Track when your children show those identified behaviors. Tally when you observe the behavior with something like stickers or points (depending on age). Display the stickers or points somewhere where your children can see their progress. At the same time, give your children specific praise when they demonstrate the desired behaviors to help draw their attention to what they are doing right.
* Identify daily and weekly goals, and work with your children to decide what reinforcement can be earned for meeting those goals. Make the goals easy to meet at the start and gradually make them more challenging as your children show success. If your children earn something easily at the start, they are more likely to “buy in” to the system and work towards it moving forward.

* + Why both daily and weekly goals, at least to start?

It is hard for children, especially younger children, to delay their gratification for a long period of time. They are more likely to maintain good behavior if they receive frequent positive feedback and reinforcement, even if quite small. Building towards greater reinforcement over time will help maintain appropriate behavior over time as well. Smaller reinforcement for meeting a daily goal could include things like earning stickers, earning extra time to do a favorite activity for that evening, or earning extra time with a chosen family member. Larger reinforcement ideas for the week could be choice of a favorite dinner at the end of the week, ability to do an infrequent but favored activity, earning a “free pass” from having to do a chore the next week, or given a new and desired tangible object. It is good to have several options in each category for your children to choose from in order to keep their interest and motivation level high.

* While you do not want to overwhelm your children by focusing on too many behaviors, you likely want to encourage other positive behaviors that are not specifically targeted by your reinforcement plan. All you have to do is give specific praise as soon as you notice your children demonstrating any behaviors you want to encourage them to use again!
* While the behavioral strategies just presented may prevent most difficult behaviors, it is unrealistic to expect that none will occur. As a result, additional strategies may be needed to manage problem behaviors.

**WHAT CHALLENGES DOES YOUR CHILD EXPERIENCE?**

Remember that all children are different and develop these skill sets at their own pace. However, if you think your child may be struggling with adopting some of the skill areas above, you can contact us in order to assist you get in contact with an Occupational Therapist.

**AEE- SPED Program provides a variety of services to support our children and families.**

**ACADEMY OF EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE**

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